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Issues of Labor and Fragmentation in Deepak Unnikrishnan's Temporary People

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Abstract

This research explores labor migration and fragmentation in Deepak Unnikrishnan's Temporary People from a diaspora perspective. This study examines the challenges faced by South Asian labor migrants in the Gulf, particularly the Arab Emirates, where they build modern cities yet have no permanent place. While the Gulf's skylines attest to the physical labor of South Asian migrants, their legal and social status remains perpetually provisional, a paradox that Unnikrishnan captures through the trope of the 'temporary person'. Deepak Unnikrishnan shows how migrant workers' identities are also displaced when 'migrating' from one location to another in search of jobs. As a result, their identities become fragmented. Moreover, this study categorizes labor migration as driven by economic necessity and temporariness, and fragmented diasporic identity as marked by displacement, linguistic hybridity, and surrealistic paradigms. This study draws on postcolonial and diaspora theories developed by Stuart Hall's notion of identity as a historical, continually produced position, which leads to the idea of the migrant's divided identities; Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity accounts for the text's in-between cultural location and linguistic mixing; and Avtar Brah's notion of diaspora space explains how migrant, citizen, employer, state, and unequal relations of labor assemble within the same city. Using qualitative textual analysis, the study analyses the title phrase 'temporary people', the concept of home and passport, 'broken birds', 'modified bodies', "chapter", and surreal moments, and narrative fragments.

Keywords: Labor; Fragmentation; Temporariness; Hybridity; Surrealism.

Introduction

Temporary People has no single protagonist or overarching plot. It consists of many interwoven stories, surreal episodes, lists, myths, and even disjointed voices. The main “characters” are the South Asian migrant workers, particularly the Malayali and Indian laborers in the United Arab Emirates. They are represented as construction workers, drivers, cleaners, domestic workers, clerks, fathers, husbands, sons, and undocumented/temporary residents. Their lives are also shaped by employers, officials, families at home, and the Gulf city itself. The reasons behind their migration stories are poverty, unemployment, family responsibilities, and better wages. However, in the Gulf, visas, passports, contracts, employers, and temporary residence permits regulate their lives. They construct roads, towers, houses, and modern cities, but they are not welcomed as permanent members of society. Many live alone, are physically exhausted, separated from family, and are afraid they will be deported or fired. The images and strange things in the book, including fractured or altered bodies, vanished people, and the desire to fly, all convey the workers’ economic exploitation and emotional disintegration. Unnikrishnan does not narrate the story of one individual; instead, it tells the story of a group of migrants who are economically important but remain socially invisible. They live a double life between their homeland and the Gulf country, where labor issues lead to fragmentation.

Temporary People is a significant book in postcolonial literary studies because it narrates the lives of migrant workers, who are often treated as background figures in the modern Gulf. The book is centered on the UAE, where most of the characters reside, and the people described are those from South Asia, primarily India and Kerala, who often live in this country for many years but are not citizens. It is not the type of realistic novel you would expect, which makes this text difficult to classify (Kayani, Mubeen, & Hameed, 2023). It is a hybrid work of connected stories, surreal episodes, mythic

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images, wordplay, and broken voices. The formal division is no coincidence; it reflects the fragmented nature of migrants’ lives, defined by the work permit, the passport, the employer, the remittances, and the fear of leaving.

The title, Temporary People, encapsulates the main paradox of migration in the Gulf. Migrants play a crucial role in the economy and in the visual production of modern cities, but remain less fully integrated into the nation's political or cultural discourses. The construction of Gulf cities is thus not merely a backdrop but a central mechanism of exclusion: the same hands that build the towers are legally barred from inhabiting them as full members of society. This paradox gives the text its postcolonial quality. Unnikrishnan not only shows the distress of laborers, but also reveals the larger system that transforms human beings into commodities of labor.

Labor migration in the Gulf differs from many other diasporas. In much diasporic literature, migration is linked to settlement, memory of homeland, cultural negotiation, and the gradual development of identity in the host country. The Gulf laboratory undermines this model, as people do not necessarily gain citizenship or social acceptance after spending a long time in a particular country. The workers can live in the Gulf for decades, have children there, get used to the languages, habits, and customs, and still never be granted permanent residency. The migrant is not fully comfortable in the Gulf, and the journey back to the homeland is hindered by time, distance, poverty, and altered family ties.

Menon's work is particularly interested in the ghostly traces and leaps of the absent migrant from the Gulf and the precarious, liminal existence of the pravasi. Alraddadi's materialist interpretation matters because it examines the economic and capitalist systems that produce migrant exploitation. In contrast, Karinkurayil's interpretation focuses on the subjectivity of the borderlands and migration through the novel's formal experimentation. This study contends that Temporary People opens up a way of thinking about migrant labor as a system of

fragmentation, determined by the hierarchy of occupations, legal status, unequal work conditions, and the unequal economic value of labor, that exposes the fragmentation of migrant laborers' sense of identity, belonging, and displacement.

This article suggests that *Temporary People* reflects the fractured state of selfhood constituted by labor migration. Economic necessity drives workers to migrate from their home countries, and visa regimes, passport dependency, temporary contracts, and limited citizenship hinder their ability to settle in the Gulf.

In my study, I use two ideas to develop my argument. The first is the problems of labor migration – economic compulsion, exploitation, passport and visa dependency, physical threat, and structural temporariness. The second is fragmentation: diasporic identity divided by belonging, fragmented language, fractured narrative voices, memory, and cultural alienation.

The study matters because it reads *Temporary People* as a research-worthy postcolonial text and thus broadens the field of diaspora studies. Overall, the study contributes to the conversation on postcolonial literature by highlighting how Unnikrishnan's work deconstructs narrow definitions of home, nation, diaspora, and identity.

Research Objectives

1. To explore issues of labor in the Gulf in *Temporary People* and how temporariness contributes to building fragmented identities.
2. To examine the fragmentation of diasporic identity created by displacement, non-belonging, cultural alienation, and denial of permanent citizenship.
3. To discuss how Unnikrishnan's surrealism, linguistic hybridity, bodily imagery, and fragmented form exemplify migrant subjectivity.

Research Questions

1. How do *Temporary People* depict the experience of South Asian migrant laborers in

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2. How does labor migration create a diasporic identity in a fragmentary way in Unnikrishnan's selected text?
3. What are the narrative strategies of *Temporary People*, and how do these strategies overturn traditional notions of home, nation, citizenship, and diaspora?

Methodology

The study uses a qualitative, textual analysis approach. *Temporary People* is the primary text, and the analysis examines common images, narratives, language, and representations of migrant laborers. This article juxtaposes the selected episodes and motifs with postcolonial and diaspora theory. It does not rely on statistical or survey-based approaches because the research object is literary representation. Instead, it explores the form and language used to create meaning in the text through labor, migration, temporariness, and the fragmentation of identity.

The main body is the complete text of the novel, not just a few chapters. They read the whole novel thematically to uncover common themes of migrant labor, temporariness, displacement, bodily fragility, linguistic hybridity, social marginalization, and fragmentation. Within this larger group of texts, specific episodes, motifs, narrative strategies, and sections were identified for closer examination, directly suggesting the study's focus on the fragmentation of migrant labor. (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The main categories were temporariness, displacement, labor fragmentation, hybridity, bodily fragmentation, linguistic fragmentation, and formal fragmentation. Temporariness is a state of structural fragility in which migrant workers' status of residence, employment, and belonging is precarious and subject to possible reversal. Displacement is experienced as the physical, social, and emotional distance of migrant workers from their place of origin and from a sense of belonging.

The theoretical insights are restricted to the work of three key thinkers: Stuart Hall, Homi K. Bhabha, and Avtar Brah. Passages that present

migrant identity as a process of becoming rather than a static or singular identity are examined and analyzed using Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity. Homi K. Bhabha's notion of hybridity is used to describe moments when cultural and linguistic limits shift, and migrant subjects negotiate between different cultural locations. The notion of diaspora and the "diaspora space" is explored in relation to the production of migrant identities and the relationships between home, host society, mobility, difference, and power. The Gulf migration context is provided by scholarship by Gardner, Longva, and Vora; the literary discussion of *Temporary People* is provided by Menon, Alraddadi, and Karinkurayil. This separation helps keep the theoretical framework from becoming cluttered with irrelevant social and critical information. The mixed approach will enable this article to engage in close reading of the text while simultaneously paving the way for broader, comparative research on migration and postcolonial identity. (Menon, 2020).

Literature Review

Useful tools for studying global diaspora include those employed by Robin Cohen, who discusses different types of diasporas, such as labor diasporas. Vijay Mishra (2007), on the other hand, stresses the emotional and imaginative aspects of diaspora, particularly the emotions of homeland, memory, and longing. Migrants indeed have a migratory history and thus a labor diaspora, but not necessarily a cohesive and coherent collective identity. (Cohen, 2020). They have a strong, yet fleeting memory of home. Home is not only a place of comfort, but also a place of longing, duty, and loss.

Longva (1997) discusses the impact of migration and exclusion in Gulf societies, and (Gardner, 2010; Vora, 2013) explore the lives and communities of migrants from India in Bahrain and Dubai. They show that migration across the Gulf is an economic phenomenon, but also a social formation that shapes citizenship, identity, family life, and belonging. The migrant is typically central to the Gulf economy, but not to the

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This inter-state condition appears in mixed speech, including alternative spellings, migrant slang, English, Malayalam, and Arabic-influenced rhythms in *Temporary People*. However, an issue not always apparent in celebratory accounts of hybridity is that cultural mixing occurs within unequal labor relations. While the migrant may create new forms in the hybrid language, it is also a language burdened by class difference, accent discrimination, bureaucratic language, and a lack of institutional power (Bhabha, 1994).

Temporary People has received recent criticism that directly tackles these questions. Gulf parvises in the book are read as ghostlike entities and highlight their presence in everyday life in the Gulf. This is integral to the present study, as the workers of Unnikrishnan are seen but not felt in the built environment. By depicting exploited and estranged people, instead of easy mobility or fluid identity. Alraddadi (2023) argues that the text contradicts the dominant narratives of migration. Unnikrishnan (2017) explores the text as an expression of borderland subjectivity, kafala, and the novel form's adaptation in the context of migrant labor. These studies reveal that *Temporary People* is not only a creative study of migration but also a significant postcolonial text that questions whether literature can represent structurally temporary people (Safran, 1991).

Recent criticism has directly addressed these concerns. Building on Menon's (2020) spectral reading and Alraddadi's (2023) critique of migration narratives, this study argues that Unnikrishnan's formal experiments are not merely aesthetic but constitute a narrative epistemology of precarity. Karinkurayil's (2024) interests include borderland subjectivity, kafala, and novel form in the context of migrant labor. This article extends these studies but frames the argument in two parts: the problems and causes of labor migration, and the fractured diasporic identity that results from such circumstances.

Existing scholarship, however, shows that migration in the Gulf region must be examined alongside the institutional framework of the

kafala system, migrant rights and well-being, social and citizenship-related exclusion, and migrant subjectivity in literary texts. Empirical research such as [Ewers et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Burmeister-Rudolph \(2024\)](#) explores the institutional and social aspects of migrant rights and status in Gulf countries. Literary research by [Karinkurayil \(2024\)](#) and [Jose \(2024\)](#) examines how migration, migrant subjectivity, migrant bodies, oil, and petro-capitalism are represented in literary texts. Nevertheless, these lines of scholarship are not enough to discuss the question of labor migration and disarticulated identity. This study thus places *Temporary People* in dialogue with these debates to address these issues.

Themes of migration, identity, language, body, home, and narrative form are often discussed in isolation from one another. In *Temporary People*, however, these elements are causally related. This article thus interprets fragmentation as a material and textual phenomenon of labor migration, as a response rather than an isolated emotional reaction.

The present study extends this important discussion but focuses particularly on the connection between labor migration and fractured diasporic identity. It argues that fragmentation in *Temporary People* is not merely psychological. Workers are disembodied; the system disconnects them from personhood and a place of belonging.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on postcolonial theory and diaspora theory. The usefulness of postcolonial theory is that it not only looks at the colonial past, but also at the influence that this history, economic inequalities, racial hierarchies, and cultural domination have on the present world. The Gulf is not necessarily discussed in the colonial terms one associates with Britain or India, but it certainly involves postcolonial labor flows. South Asian workers move to the Gulf because of underdevelopment, unemployment, wage differentials, and transnational labor demands. They are not autonomous from colonial capitalism and world inequality, which

International "Journal of Academic Research for Humanities (JARH) 6(3)" have shaped their history.

The theoretical framework is restricted to the works of three key thinkers: Stuart Hall, Homi K. Bhabha, and Avtar Brah. This study operationalizes Hall's processual identity, Bhabha's hybridity, and Brah's diaspora space as an integrated analytical triad, rather than treating them as discrete theoretical options, to illuminate the mutually constitutive relationship between material labor conditions and subjective fragmentation. The Gulf migration context is provided by Scholarship written by Gardner, Longva, and Vora; the literary discussion of *Temporary People* by Menon, Alraddadi, and Karinkurayil. This separation helps keep the theoretical framework from being cluttered with irrelevant social and critical information.

Migration, exile, displacement, and the crisis of identity have preoccupied postcolonial literature since its inception. For writers from former colonies, this includes the process of moving across boundaries while bearing the weight of colonial history, economic disparity, and cultural memory. However, much postcolonial criticism has focused on migration to Western countries like Britain, Canada, and the United States. Despite the importance of South Asian labor migration to the Gulf, migration has, in many instances, not been the subject of sufficient literary analysis. The *Temporary People* novel thus helps shift the debate from elite or middle-class migration to precarious migration.

Moreover, [Bhabha \(1994\)](#) suggests that postcolonial identities can be found amid contact zones, where cultures meet, translate, and disrupt one another. *Temporary People* are characters who live in an in-between state. They are between host land and homeland, in between mother tongue and the language of the host land. The hybrid nature of the Gulf migrant is not an easy-to-understand symbol of freedom. Unequal labor relations, pressure, and dependency often produce it.

Further, the idea of diaspora space as outlined by Avtar Brah can be applied. [Brah](#)

(1996) explains that “Diaspora” is not about the migrant’s movement. In *Temporary People*, Brah suggests that the Gulf is a diaspora. Migrants live in the city with its inhabitants, but not as citizens. Migrant workers are welcomed as workers, but not as part of the community.

Migrants are an integral part of their economy and daily activities but cannot be full members of it. The four elements- employer, visa system, passport, labor camp, and family home are all parts of the same diaspora space, as is the urban skyline. This theory of Brah helps account for another aspect of the worker’s life: he can be physically present for decades and still be politically and symbolically transient.

Diaspora theory has developed tools to address the emotional and cultural implications of migration. Typically, diaspora is defined as exile from a homeland and the creation of identity in another. However, *Temporary People* is uncertain if diaspora can exist if migrants are not permitted to remain permanently. (Clifford, 1994). Gulf migrants are not just a flurry of houses being traded from one to another. They live in a temporary structure, without full ownership of the host land, and the homeland remains distant through absence (Vora, 2013). This creates what can be described as a fractured diaspora, a diaspora with no secure arrival.

My study adopts a hybridity approach to better understand the text’s mixed cultural and linguistic world. Unnikrishnan’s prose style is characterized by both English and Malayalam, as well as Arabic-influenced speech, migrant slang, bureaucratic language, and newly coined words. Mixed language indicates the mixed lives of migrant workers. Hybridity cannot always be empowered in the Gulf context.

Liminality is in-between, not in and not out. The migrants in *Temporary People* are “liminal figures” who are in the Gulf, but not part of the Gulf’s citizenship system. They work, but they are not residents; they are members of the community but not nationals, and they provide but are not present for their families. Their temporary status becomes a life as refugees.

The main issue of my study is fragmented

identity. Fragmentation manifests in *Temporary People* as broken bodies, unstable voices, mixed languages, disappeared persons, damaged memories, and documents like passports and visas.

The three theorists complement each other and support the article’s two main points. The theme of labor migration is discussed through the lens of economic inequality, labor dependency, passport politics, bodily exploitation, and temporariness. The framework thus not only links social issues with literary representation, rather than using theory as a disembodied term, but also provides a foundation for further elaboration.

Discussion and Analysis

Deepak Unnikrishnan’s *Temporary People* is a powerful postcolonial text because it gives literary form to the lives of migrant workers who are central to the Gulf economy but marginal to its official imagination. The text shows that labor migration is not simply physical movement from one country to another. Temporary migrants are viewed as experiencing economic coercion, emotional isolation, cultural bargaining, and physical vulnerability. The temporary workers are now victims of contemporary displaceability. They are wanted and not wanted, here and not there, useful and disposable.

Temporary People is an essay about diasporic identities, which labor migration breaks up through the temporality of people’s lives. *Temporary People* remain tied to their homeland through memory, yet lack immediate ties because distance and time separate them. However, they have contributed to the development of these guest lands and countries, yet they are not permanently attached to them. This dual exclusion forms their identities.

Unnikrishnan’s style is crucial in depicting these themes and identity-related points. The surrealism of events, the broken bodies, the language, and the shifting voices give the text a sense of realism. (Kayani, Aslam, & Hameed, 2023).

The condition of migrants is absurd because it asks people to build homes and nations for

others while remaining temporary themselves. The text accordingly turns literary experimentation into an ethical political representation. The novel *Temporary People* asks readers to reflect on and rethink what it means to have a diaspora identity and community based on settlements and multiculturalism.

Labor Migration in *Temporary People*

Temporary People examines labor migration as a system that represents the human body primarily in economic terms. Their work is essential to the development and maintenance of the modern Gulf city, but their own lives are often not considered permanent or central. This is one of the most potent postcolonial issues of the text. Migrant workers' bodies are used for construction, cleaning, service, transport, care, and repair. Migrant workers' bodies make cities modern. However, workers are still socially weak and politically marginalized.

Labor migration is not a neat success that Unnikrishnan offers. The dream of working in the Gulf is linked to income, remittances, and family survival, but also to fear, loneliness, and humiliation. Workers go abroad to seek a better life, but the host country treats them as temporary workers and does not see them as human beings. This requires and causes migration. Movement is not free for many workers; it is compelled by poverty and unequal development.

One significant symbol in the text is the passport. Passports typically imply identity, mobility, and legal identity. However, for migrant workers, it also symbolizes control. Documents, employers, visas, and border systems are the foundations of the worker's movement. Migrants without documentation are vulnerable; migrants with documentation are controlled (Longva, 1997). This paradox highlights the inequality in the mobility systems now in place.

The first quotation in the epigraph of "Limbs" is that workers "begin to fade" after completing the buildings, and the last quotation is that "ghosts may already be falling" (Unnikrishnan, 2017, p. 13). In the first section, "Limbs,"

Unnikrishnan embodies the fragmentation of migrant identity. It is set in a city built by labor, mostly by men, who disappear after completing the buildings they worked on (Unnikrishnan, 2017, p. 12). The workers' disappearance implies that Gulf modernity is keeping these buildings alive while eradicating the people who created them with their bodies. The final image of migrant workers turning into ghosts who are "falling" now links the development of architecture to social invisibility, workplace injuries, and deaths. Unnikrishnan (2017) says, "My family is with me, they have wings too, we fly" (p. 18). His feet turn into claws that grip the building and rip it out of the ground.

The dream, however, comes before his death, and flight remains a freedom he is deprived of. In "Birds", this connection between constructing and destroying the body is worked out more clearly. Anna Varghese works with the broken bodies of construction workers who fall from buildings and glues their broken parts together. The tape is not a real means of restoring the workers to wholeness; it simply represents the pallid and precarious cures available to those whose bodies are used as replaceable machines of production. Iqbal's helplessness and his imminent death further individualize this violence, as does Anna's encounter with him. Iqbal imagines himself and his family having wings: "My family is with me; we all have wings... We fly." His imagined flight represents a wish to break free from the precarious building space and the situational condition of a migrant ensnared in his body.

Anna Varghese is a tape maker for construction workers who have fallen from buildings. The workers are said to be immune to falling to their deaths but not to injury. This monstrous "repair" does not restore them completely; it only makes them fit into the labor system. Taping people together after they have fallen from buildings becomes a regular job for Anna. The repaired body is provisional, reflecting a system more concerned with maintaining the utility of labor (Unnikrishnan, 2017, p. 100).

While his body can climb, build, carry, and

endure, a migrant worker remains economically valuable; when he is injured and exhausted, he risks being removed from the workplace and from the city's social narrative.

citizen, rights-bearing subject or permanent member of society. Mukundan's declaration, "Some of me—elsewhere" (Unnikrishnan, 2017, p. 192), divides the body into parts. Divides the body into pieces and segments.

Images of broken, altered, or transformed bodies also signify the violence of labor migration. The workers are not only psychologically wounded, but the load of work, fatigue, risk, and replaceability also burdens their bodies. Like birds, whose bodies are injured and whose flight reflects both the desire for freedom and the reality of injured working bodies, stories can carry a suggestive quality. The city is stacked up with buildings and towers, but the makers of these towers remain vulnerable to falling, getting hurt, and vanishing. The beauty of the city's skyline is therefore linked to the unseen plight of migrant workers.

The terms used to identify migrant workers in the list provided in "Pravasis" include outsourced workers, expatriates, non-citizens, homeless persons, temporary people, illegal residents, deportees, and replaceable new arrivals. This is one of your clearest references to the temporary nature of law and society.

"Pravasis" lists the migrant as an expatriate, a non-citizen, a homeless person, a temporary person, an 'illegal', a 'deported', and one who is always coming back (Unnikrishnan, 2017, p. 24). Temporariness is presented as a system of classification rather than a temporary state.

Temporariness is part of labor migration, a legal status in Temporary People, and a way of life in which migrant workers live in rented rooms, labor camps, buses, airports, and workplaces. Even if they stay for years, they are seen as people who will leave. These people are not temporary because they do not matter; rather, the system uses their labor and denies their permanence.

The situation of temporary existence and non-legal belonging is an antithesis to the

traditional notion of diaspora. This situation calls the traditional notion of diaspora into question. Many diaspora narratives include elements of settlement, community building, and making a new home in the host country. Settlements are not allowed for Temporary People. The migrant might form emotional bonds with the Gulf, but the legal and social arrangements remain temporary. Migrants remain part of the "Gulf's story" but not part of the "Gulf". They are part of the city's rhythm and economy, but not citizens.

Fragmented Diasporic Identity in Temporary People

The workers must split themselves between their homelands, which need their remittances, and the lands where they work, which need their labor. They are expected to look after their family back home, but their absence also alters family relationships. They could be dads, sons, husbands, or brothers who love them through money transfers, phone calls, and occasional home visits. This creates a split in the emotional self between physical absence and economic responsibility.

In "Nalinakshi", an old woman says that migrating means leaving home, needing money, coming back once a year on vacation, getting older while away, and finding out that her family has passed away without her realizing it. The text concludes that "pravasi" means "absence" (Unnikrishnan, 2017, p. 158).

Home is also disrupted in Temporary People. Many migrants leave home because of a lack of work and dignity. Meanwhile, the Gulf remains an incomplete home where belonging is limited. This ambivalent double displacement creates a diasporic identity without solid foundations. The migrant has more than one place to call home, but no home. This is an example of a condition that corresponds to the description of identity as a place rather than as a substance, a place created through history and representation. (Hall, 1990).

The Gulf is also a postcolonial space, as seen in Temporary People. South Asian, African, and other migrants share spaces with citizens and expatriates from various classes, but their status

differs. Its global, modern appearance relies on temporary work, and its modernity rests on that. This makes it an important site for postcolonial reading, as it helps us understand how power functions beyond formal colonialism through markets, borders, and cities. (Hameed & Aslam, 2024).

Unnikrishnan also questions the concept of a nation. Both relate to the migrant's disintegration: the land of origin sends its workers to foreign lands, while foreign lands welcome them but do not let them stay permanently. Migration is then a subject created by the deficiencies and needs of several National systems.

Meanwhile, language signals migrants' vulnerability. Accent and grammar may turn into indicators of class, ethnicity, and social inferiority. Workers' speech may be ridiculed, unheard, or misheard. In this respect, linguistic hybridity is not just an expression of cultural mixing. It also displays power. Those who control institutions control the language of law, employment, and citizenship. Migrants develop their own modes of expression but remain stuck in a bureaucratic system that does not fully acknowledge them. Dehumanization is evident in both the body and the language. Many characters in *Temporary People* have been stripped of their personhood and are treated as functions, body parts, documents, or jobs. These images reveal the separation of workers from full personhood in migrant labor systems.

Moreover, the worker's worth is marked by their availability, obedience, strength, and hands. Workers are not even allowed to access their inner lives, memories, and imaginations. Using surrealism and absurdity, Unnikrishnan reveals this dehumanization. The odd events in the story are not dreams or escapes from reality; they are reality revealed. Memory also plays a major role in the text. Migrants remember childhood, family, village, food, religion, and language. The homeland is both real and imagined, a loved and lost place, but return is not easy. Both homelands and migrants have changed over the years, and migrants may no

longer fit in their homelands. This uncertainty is key to the disintegration of diasporic identity.

In the Gulf as a postcolonial space, *Temporary People's* organization supports this proposition. The book has no single linear narrative or central protagonist. Instead, it presents several voices, odd episodes, lists, myths, and narrative breaks. This collective structure reflects the fractured migrant life. Several temporary lives are linked through work, migration, and a lack of belonging. The fragmented form is thus an ethical choice as it reframes the categorization of migrant experience as a single story.

The magical realism and surrealism in the text are also significant, with ordinary realism, social detail, and direct description depicting migrant exploitation. Unnikrishnan, on the other hand, takes a more experimental approach, as the migrant experience can sometimes feel unreal. It is possible to live in a land for years and years and be told that you do not belong. Even when a person is not in the family, he or she can still support it. Such a paradox overwhelms, and surrealism becomes an appropriate mode of literature.

The strategies in *Temporary People* question notions of "home", "nation", and "diaspora". Home is not a location; it is a fleeting memory and an unfulfilled need. A Nation is not a natural community; it is a legal and political entity that contains some and excludes others. Unnikrishnan's text, then, requires a more critical reading of the language of migration in the contemporary context.

Conclusion

Deepak Unnikrishnan's *Temporary People* is a work of literature that speaks to the lives of workers from South Asia, who are central to the Gulf economy but remain invisible to the official economy. The analysis of labor migration and divided diasporic identity reveals a linkage among material, psychological, and cultural effects.

Temporary People thus extends postcolonial literature beyond well-known migration narratives focused on Western settlement and

toward the South Asian labor diaspora in the Gulf.

The first major discovery from this study is that *Temporary People* describes a structural state of temporariness defined by labor migration. Legal, political, and economic systems make migrants temporary, and migrants are not temporary because they lack attachment to the Gulf. Gulf cities need them to operate, yet they are denied belonging. The text presents a paradox. "The workers create permanence, yet live impermanent lives."

The second is that multiple interconnected forces create fragmented diasporic identity in the text. These include displacement from their homeland, exclusion from citizenship, exploitation of their labor, family separation, linguistic instability, and vulnerability of their bodies. Fragmentation is a social, emotional, and material condition.

The third discovery is that the narrator's voice is crucial to the text's significance in Unnikrishnan's writing. There are some steps, such as structure, surreal images, hybrid language, and body transformation, that are not stylistic experiments. These are steps taken formally to address the state of a migrant's life. The text's form does not reflect the instability it describes. In this regard, *Temporary People* is a work of fragmentation.

Finally, it portrays migration as a battle for the survival of human identity in systems that value the worker's work more than the worker's right to home, dignity, and permanence.

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